

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
(Attorney Docket No. MCKI007)

TITLE

SHOPPING DISPLAY AND WRITING SURFACE ASSISTANT

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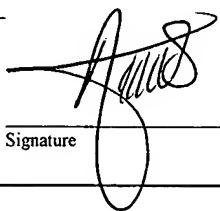
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Name of Person Signing Andrea Vasquez

Date

10/08/03

Signature



APPLICATION FOR PATENT

INVENTOR: Stella H. McKinney, a U.S. citizen residing in Houston, Texas

TITLE: SHOPPING DISPLAY AND WRITING SURFACE ASSISTANT

SPECIFICATION CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a utility application based on and claiming the benefit of U.S. provisional application No. 60/417,010 filed October 08, 2002.

STATEMENTS REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] Not applicable.

REFERENCE TO A MICROFICHE APPENDIX

[0003] Not applicable.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] A shopping display and writing surface device, similar in nature to a clipboard, may be mounted on a shopping cart handle or the like. The device generally has a clamping device for connection to the shopping cart handle, a bracket connected to the clamping device and a panel connected to the bracket.

[0005] Certain embodiments of this invention are not limited to any particular individual features disclosed, but include combinations of features distinguished from the prior art in their structures and functions. Features of the invention have been broadly described so that the detailed descriptions that follow may be better understood, and in order that the contributions of this invention to the arts may be better appreciated. There are, of course, additional aspects of the invention described below. These may be included in the subject matter of the claims to this invention. Those skilled in the art that have the benefit of this invention, its teachings, and suggestions will appreciate that the conceptions of this disclosure may be used as a creative basis for designing other structures, methods and systems for carrying out and practicing the present invention. The claims of this invention are to be read to include any legally equivalent devices or methods which do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

[0006] The present invention recognizes, addresses and meets the previously-mentioned preferences or objectives in its various possible embodiments and equivalents thereof. To one of skill in this art who has the benefit of this invention's realizations, teachings, disclosures, and suggestions, other purposes and advantages will be appreciated from the following description and the accompanying drawings. The detail in the description is not intended to thwart this patent's object to claim this invention no matter how others may later disguise it by variations in form or additions of further improvements. These descriptions illustrate certain preferred embodiments and are not to be used to improperly limit the scope of the invention which may have other equally effective or legally equivalent embodiments.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] Figure 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of the invention representing two positions of a moving shopping cart.

Figure 2 is a side, elevation view showing how an embodiment of the invention may be clamped to a shopping cart handle.

Figure 3 is a back view of the embodiment shown in Figure 2.

Figure 4 is a view similar to Figure 2 showing another embodiment of the invention.

Figure 5 is a back view of the embodiment shown in Figure 4.

Figure 6 is a front, elevation view of another embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0008] Referring to Figures 1-6, a shopping display and writing surface device (or shopping assistant 10), similar in nature to a clipboard, may be mounted on a shopping cart handle 12 or the like. The shopping assistant 10 is preferably made of plastic and may be made in a variety of colors, e.g., but not limited to, red, blue, green, orange, pink, white, black, and/or grey, to help shoppers identify their cart 14 (shown in phantom lines) while shopping.

[0009] The shopping assistant 10 includes a clamping device 20 such as a screw-on clamp 24 with a layer of padding/rubber 22, a living hinge 26 with a layer of padding/rubber 22, a padded-jaw vise-clamp or the like (e.g., a friction increasing pliable material having a similar effect to the layer of padding/rubber 22, and/or a friction increasing contoured surface) to attach the shopping assistant to the shopping cart handle 12. The clamping device may be user-adjustable in attaching to the shopping cart handle 12, such as, via the padding 22 and screw(s) 21 (see Figure 6). Bracket(s) 30a,b connect the clamping device 20 to a panel 40. The panel 40 has planar upper surface 42 which may be used for support and as a writing surface and which may make up over eighty percent of the upper surface. The shopping assistant 10 is preferably

attached to the shopping cart handle 12 at an angle such that the planar upper surface 42 faces the line of vision of the average shopper and such that the shopper may conveniently use the planar upper surface 42 as a writing surface. The planar upper surface 42 may be blank or it may contain information, such as, information about the store or the store layout. The planar upper surface 42 may be framed by an aesthetically pleasing border 44. A clip 46 (or clips) is connected to the panel 40 by a hinge/hinge-joint 48 at the top-side, bottom-side, either lateral-side, edge-side (or any combination of such sides) of the panel 40. The hinge 48 is preferably spring loaded (or biased in some other manner) and may be mounted to the planar surface 42, the border 44, or it may be embedded in a slot in the panel 40. The spring loaded clip 46 may be used to secure shopping lists, coupons, recipes, etc. to the planar upper surface 42. The clip 46 may be any known form of a clip including those with relatively larger and relatively smaller gripping surfaces. A lever 50 may be connected to the spring loaded clip by a rivet 52 or the like, and such connection preferably allows the lever 50 to rotate with respect to the spring loaded clip 46. The lever 52 may be used to open the clip 46. Information about the store where the shopper is shopping or advertising media may be placed or molded onto the planar upper surface 42. A device or devices such as a calculator, computing device, monitor and/or coupon printer may also be mounted on the shopping assistant 10 or may become the panel 40.

[0010] Fig. 6 shows another embodiment having the longer axis of panel 40a rotated ninety degrees from that shown in Figs. 1 and 5. Clip(s) 46a are located on the lateral-sides of the panel 40a. The clips 46a may be spring loaded against a mounting plate 45 which may be fastened to the panel 40a on the front (see Fig. 2), back (as shown in Fig. 6), or embedded in the panel 40a. Clamping device 20 attaches to the shopping cart handle which is shown in phantom lines.

[0011] The shopping assistant 10 may be made of other materials, such as, for example, metal. The panel 40 may be movable/rotatable with respect to the clamping device 40 or bracket(s) 30a,b by any known device such that the panel 40 may be flipped, slid or rotated so that the upper shopping basket 16 of the shopping cart 14 is unobstructed by the shopping assistant 10. The side profile of the brackets 30a, b as best seen in Figs. 2 and 4 may be trimmed down, as desired.

[0012] In conclusion, therefore, it is seen that the present invention and the embodiments disclosed herein and those covered by the claims are well adapted to carry out the objectives and obtain the ends set forth. Certain changes can be made in the subject matter without departing from the spirit and the scope of this invention. It is realized that changes are possible within the scope of this invention and it is further intended that each element or step recited in any claims is to be understood as referring to all equivalent elements or steps. The claims are intended to cover the invention as broadly as legally possible in whatever form it may be utilized.